

THE CHURCH'S MISSION.

A recent address to the graduates of the Hartford Theological Seminary, by President Woodrow Wilson, of Princeton, presents one of the best estimates and statements of the church's true mission that we have ever encountered from a secular source. President Wilson seems to have grasped the truth more fully than most of the preachers themselves, and he has expressed it with a precision and strength remarkable for a layman dealing with religious principles and doctrine. He thinks that the Christian Church in our age is tempted to think of itself as chiefly a philanthropic institution; at best, an institution for supplying the spiritual impulse necessary for carrying on the great enterprises which relieve the distress of the body and mind which disturbs the world. He declares that the business of the church is not to pity men. "The business of the church is not to rescue them from their suffering, by the mere means of material relief, or even by means of spiritual reassurance. The church can not afford to pity men, because it knows that men, if they would take it, have the richest and completest inheritance that it is possible to conceive, and that, rather than being deserving of pity, they are to be challenged to assert in themselves those things which will make them independent of pity. No man who has recovered the integrity of his soul is any longer the object of pity, and it is to enable him to recover that lost integrity that the Christian Church is organized. To my thinking, the Christian Church stands at the center, not only of philanthropy, but at the center of education, at the center of science, at the center of philosophy, at the center of politics; in short, at the center of sentient and thinking life. And the business of the Christian Church, of the Christian minister, is to show the spiritual relations of men to the great world-processes, whether they be physical or spiritual. It is nothing less than to show the plan of life and men's relation to the plan of life. What the minister has to do is to re-establish the spiritual kingdom among us, by proclaiming in season and out of season that there is no explanation for anything that is not first or last a spiritual explanation, and that man can not live by bread alone, can not live by scientific thought alone; that he is not only starving, but that he knows that he is starving, and that digestion of this dry stuff that he takes into his mouth is not possible unless it be conveyed by the living water of the spirit."

This conception of the truly spiritual end and mission of the church seems to be growing amongst thoughtful laymen and ministers alike. In a recent symposium, in a popular magazine, on the problem of the present condition of the church and on the alleged failure on its part to meet the requirements of men, several of the leading men of different faiths voiced this one cardinal principle and made earnest plea for a greater emphasis of it on the part of the ministry. The world may glorify the practical, but when it pauses to think it sees the power of the spiritual and demands it. That church and that ministry will have greatest sway over the hearts and lives of men which go deepest down into the springs of those lives. Reformation can never do what regeneration offers.

MAGAZINE REFORMS.

It is a spectacular feature of the times, that a number of the monthly magazines, pictorial and attractive in many ways, have taken in hand to set the country right on a variety of important subjects. Not only Standard Oil and Trusts have been raked over the coals, but such serious subjects as morality and religion in the universities, and the condition and work of the Churches have been discussed with a free hand by writers competent and incompetent. Some, if not all of these papers, have been so extravagant and sensational as to raise the suspicion that they were intended, not for the high purposes of morality and the protection of the people, but to advertise and sell the magazines. They may all be read with discrimination and a suspended judgment.

In the September number of one of these magazines, one of the investigators and regulators of things, a well known writer for periodicals, has an article on the "Faith of the Unchurched"; that is, what has come to be 'the religion of the body of people outside of the churches, a religion of humanity and temporal welfare, which is not religion at all. Limiting his vision to the city of New York, the writer affirms the failure of the churches to meet the wants of the people, and alleges a decrease in attendance upon church services, and a decrease in the money given by church people for church and religious purposes. Those among the rich who are professedly Christians, are no longer giving largely, he says, to the great religious causes which the churches promote, but to other causes—education, libraries, hospitals, relief of the poor, care of the dependent, medical research, and such like things which have to do with the present condition of the world around them.

New York is the metropolis of a great and rich country, the center of wealth and of money-getting and power, of worldly fashion and pleasure. From all parts of the country it becomes the resort, and then often the home of the worldly and ambitious, the mammon-worshipping and the pleasure-loving. Swarms of men gather in the city who have no care for the churches and their religion, to whom religious services are irksome and profitless. Those of a religious surrounding and profession in other places are there drawn into the great current of worldliness and pleasure and immorality. Failing to form fixed church relations, many yield to the atmosphere and influence around them and attend no church whatever.

Yet there is a great deal of religion in the great city, and a large body of people, devout, godly, zealous, charitable people who work and give and pray for the extension of the Kingdom of God among men. Great sums of money are given for religious work in the city and for missions at home and abroad. In very large proportion the revenues for the Christian service of the world, educational and missionary, of the great churches of this country, come from the churches of New York City.

It must be said that in the great cities, the influences against the religious life are very powerful. There is everything to divert attention, a thousand things are appealing for interest and time, and it is difficult to win attention for the Word of God, even among those who profess the Christian Faith. More